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NATURAL SELECTION IN ETHICS.[1]

THE biological doctrine of natural selection has been applied to ethics, more or less literally, by writers representing the most diverse intellectual types. It is important therefore to determine whether this principle of organic evolution can be employed to explain the facts of morality. In this investigation it is not necessary to make any assumption regarding the validity of natural selection in biology. A perfectly definite conception, which happens to be originally biological, has been used in ethics, and all that is incumbent upon us, therefore, is to understand clearly what the conception is, before proceeding to consider whether its application to morality is legitimate or the reverse.

The salient features of the theory of natural selection can be briefly recalled to mind. Everywhere in the organic world more individuals are produced than can possibly survive, and this universal tendency to increase beyond the means of subsistence necessarily brings with it a struggle for existence. The struggle is so keen that any individuals which vary in a way that gives them an advantage, however slight, will have the best chance of surviving and of transmitting the favorable variation. Nature thus selects a variation by killing off in time those individuals who do not possess it. The variations selected all tend to adapt the animal more completely to its environment, since variations of this sort are alone advantageous in the struggle for existence. On this hypothesis, therefore, evolution proceeds because organic beings which show an advance in adaptation to environment live and multiply in virtue of this fact at the expense of their less fortunate competitors.

The implications of the theory require more emphasis. Natural selection depends upon the struggle for bare life, and therefore for individual existence, since life is essentially an individual matter. It can, we are told, develop organs and capaci-

[1] An address delivered before the Philosophical Club of Bryn Mawr College.

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ties in one being for the detriment of others, but it cannot modify the structure of an individual for the good of others, unless the individual is itself distinctly benefited thereby. It puts a premium on craft and brute strength ruthlessly exercised at the expense of the weaker or less cunning. 'The weakest and stupidest go to the wall, while the toughest and shrewdest survive.'[1] Nor can we console ourselves with the reflection that the survival of the fittest is thus secured. As Darwin admits, and as Huxley insists, the 'fittest' are not necessarily the best.[2] The fittest are those who are best adapted to cope with their environment, who can by any means survive. In short, as Haeckel puts it, the struggle is a struggle of each for himself, of each against all. Survive if you can, no matter how, is the law as laid down by natural selection.

Let us turn now from natural selection to the typical systems of ethics founded on natural selection. The transition is striking. We pass from the repulsive to the attractive, from the horrors of this Ishmaelite strife to the peaceful serenity of fraternal love and sympathy. The Golden Rule, Darwin tells us, is the essence of morality. Clifford maintains that the spring of virtuous action is the social instinct; the sense of duty in a man is the prompting of a self other than his own; conscience is that portion of a man's nature which is what it is for the sake of the whole.[3] That morality is social we hear on all sides.

On what arguments does this remarkable change of standpoint depend? Huxley insisted that morality, being social, is directly at variance with the struggle for existence which is ruthlessly individual. But the advocates of natural selection in ethics assert that morality, social as it is, has been produced out of, and in virtue of, the struggle for existence. The argument is at first sight plausible enough. The presence of sympathy means that all the members of a group in turn assist one another; it means the possibility of coöperation. "When two tribes of primeval man living in the same country came into competition, other

[1] Cf. Huxley, *Nineteenth Century*, Pt. I, 1888, p. 165.
[2] *Ibid.*, p. 163.
[3] *Lectures and Essays*, 2d ed., p. 363.

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things being equal, if the one tribe included a greater number of sympathetic and faithful members always ready to warn each other of danger, and defend each other, this tribe would succeed better and conquer the other." This is Darwin's account of the matter, but the statement is typical. Sympathy, that is, would enable the tribe to survive and therefore the individual. It is thus a variation which would be selected in the struggle for existence on account of its survival value. At first, those sympathetic variants would have no sense of right or wrong. They act sympathetically, not because they feel it is morally right to do so, but simply because they have a natural tendency in that direction. As knowledge develops, however, and man becomes a reflective being, sympathy and reflection give rise to conscience, the sense of right and wrong. Here again we may take Darwin's description of the process. A cognitive being who reflects cannot live merely in the present. In his case an action is not over with when it is done. The past rises up before him in memory, and conflicts or harmonizes with the present. Now the social instinct is always present. It is not always the strongest, however, and an individual may therefore, under the influence of another desire, act in defiance of his sympathetic instinct. But if he satisfies his hunger, for instance, at the expense of others, he will on reflection feel a conflict between what he has done and what his social nature demands. Moreover, his hunger, being satisfied, is no longer as strong as it was; the social instinct is as strong as ever, relatively stronger now than his satisfied hunger. Hence he wishes he had not acted as he did; he is unhappy, feels remorse, and resolves to conduct himself otherwise in the future. By a continuous repetition of this process, "man comes at last to feel that it is best for him to obey his most persistent impulse." "The imperious word ought," we are led to infer, then arises.[1] Conscience is therefore the voice of our most persistent impulse, the voice of sympathy, or, as Clifford puts it, the voice of the tribal self.

Thus, through sympathy and reflection, those actions which conduce to the survival of society come to have the high sanc-

[1] *Descent of Man*, ch. iv, pp. 110 *ff.*

tion of conscience. The further development of intellect renders a further development of morality possible. A fully reflective being can look into the future and foresee what consequences the present will eventually bring. Such a being is not compelled to proceed blindly in one direction until it falls unawares into the pit of destruction, or learns by actually surviving that its path was the path of safety. And since the more thoughtful members of a community can reflect for the community and discover beforehand what actions will in the end be fatal, a society can, if necessary, have the opportunity of mending its ways, and avoid extinction by the adoption of better habits of conduct. In this way, as Professor Ritchie tells us, a higher form of morality is possible; the cruel process of natural selection is anticipated and obviated by more peaceful methods.[1] The development of intellect, moreover, leads to a still more significant development of morality, since it involves the gradual extension of sympathy beyond the tribe or nation. This is not emphasized equally by all the writers we are now considering, but it follows necessarily from the very nature of sympathy. For sympathy depends upon the sense of community with others, and, though it naturally extends most rapidly within our own social group, it must go beyond those limits as soon as we recognize that individuals outside our tribe or nation are, nevertheless, fellow creatures. This is Darwin's account of the matter, and it is the only one which is tenable in view of the facts.[2]

The transformation is complete. The characteristic impulses of human nature are now directly at variance with the impulses which underlie the struggle for bare existence, and yet they are the product of this purely individualistic strife. The struggle for existence leads to the 'selection' of sympathy and intellect, and these turn the struggle of each against all into a struggle of each for all. We started with a barbarous contest for bare life, in which nothing counted but success; we end with a sense of right and wrong, compelling us, not merely to respect the rights of others, but also to take an active interest in their welfare.

[1] *Darwinism and Politics*, p. 105.
[2] *Descent of Man*, ch. iv, p. 122.

This literal transformation of a thing into its opposite cannot be viewed without misgiving, and, when we examine the argument, we find much to diminish the plausibility of this dialectic transition. First of all, the precise point which has to be proved must be made clear. What has to be established is *not* the fact that sympathy and morality are the best possible aids in the struggle for existence, or the fact that they are in themselves better in this respect than individual strife. All this is irrelevant, for we are not considering the origin of the best possible, or of the intrinsically better. We are dealing with what is possible or probable in the actual circumstances. Now the circumstances are plain. If we say that morality and sympathy were originally variations selected as advantageous by the struggle for existence, we must mean that this struggle was originally a contest between non-moral and non-sympathetic individuals. It would be absurd to maintain that sympathy and morality had been evolved through the struggle for existence, if we meant that they had always been there. The question then is: Could morality and sympathy be selected in the course of a struggle for existence between individuals who are non-moral and non-sympathetic?

Since sympathy is put forward as the foundation of morality, we shall first consider whether sympathy can be regarded as a variation which is selected on account of its survival value in the process of a non-sympathetic struggle. This variation cannot be preserved if the sympathetic individual is eliminated, and the sympathetic variant as such cannot be selected for preservation unless sympathy aids him to survive. The precise question then is: Will the individual who happens to be sympathetic have, in virtue of this fact, an advantage in a struggle for life which is carried on by his fellow competitors in a purely selfish way?

Rendered thus definite, the question presents serious difficulties to the advocates of natural selection. Sympathy implies an unselfish regard for others, consideration for others without thought of self. Pity, says Schopenhauer, obliterates the distinction between self and not-self, and Schopenhauer was not prone to exaggerate the nobility of human nature.

Clifford makes the same assertion in regard to all those kindly feelings toward others which are vaguely included under the terms 'social instinct' and 'sympathy.' The fact indicated by these terms, he asserts, "is not altruism, it is not the doing good to others *as others;* it is the service of the community by a member of it who loses in that service the consciousness that he is anything different from the community."[1] This is true, just because sympathy depends upon the sense of community with others, and therefore leads to action which transcends the distinction between self and others. The application of this to the question in dispute is obvious. If sympathy implies self-forgetfulness, and if the struggle for existence is so keen that a slight disadvantage turns the balance in the direction of death, then the sympathetic individual will surely perish, for self-forgetfulness is a great disadvantage in a struggle for life in which other combatants fight solely for their own hand. The sympathetic individual gives to others, and receives nothing in return. Indeed, he has a fatal inclination to give where most is required, for he is influenced by pity and this feeling becomes more intense in proportion to the distress of the sufferer. He adds to his own load the burdens of others; he has a preference for the heaviest burdens he can find. Thus foolishly does he handicap himself in the race for life, and the victory cannot be his. He is doomed to extinction by the perversity of his nature, and sympathy perishes with him.

The objection will doubtless be made that this argument applies only in the case of isolated individuals, and would not be valid if a number of individuals varied simultaneously. On the theory of fortuitous variation, however, simultaneous variation on the part of an appreciable number of individuals cannot be regarded as a probability. Even if, by a lucky chance, a number of sympathetic variants appeared at the same time, the chances are still smaller that they will be able to form a sympathetic group, for this implies that they appear at the same place as well as at the same time. The objection not only rests on the assumption that this will happen, but also tacitly presupposes that the sympathetic

[1] *Lectures and Essays*, p. 229.

variants will naturally form themselves into a community which opposes itself as a unit to the individuals forming the rest of the original aggegrate. This supposition is wholly at variance with the nature of sympathy, which, as we have seen, implies self-forgetfulness. It must also be remembered that there are no historical reasons for the limitation, since we are dealing with the origin of the social group, and, by hypothesis, the natural range of the social instinct is not circumscribed by artificial social barriers, historically conditioned. The unselfish can selfishly combine against all others, only if selfish calculation acts as a restraint on sympathy, and in attempting to form a selfish combination sympathetic individuals are always at a disadvantage, since they have their natural unselfishness as an enemy within the camp. On the other hand, it cannot be assumed that the outsiders would necessarily remain a mere aggregate in the presence of a hostile combination. Sooner or later the common danger would unite them, and, since they would greatly outnumber the sympathetic few, the fate of the latter could not long remain in doubt.

Darwin's own argument brings to light the difficulties of the doctrine that sympathy can be accounted for by means of natural selection. In the fifth chapter of the *Descent of Man*, he first tells us that the social virtues were acquired through natural selection on account of their paramount importance for the tribe in the struggle for life. Immediately afterwards, he remarks that the members of the tribe who first became endowed with social qualities would on the average perish in larger numbers than other men. We then find that sympathy, though it was selected as an advantage for the tribe in its contest with other groups, has little regard for tribal limitations and inevitably tends to extend to all humanity. After that we are not surprised to learn that in other respects it is something of a failure as a survival advantage. It leads man to cherish the sick and infirm, allowing the latter the opportunity of transmitting their weakness, thus diminishing the survival efficiency of the race. All this is prefaced by the remark that here for the first time have the problems of ethics been approached exclusively from the standpoint of natural his-

tory, which leads one to doubt whether on the whole it is well to approach one group of facts exclusively from the point of view of another.

That it is impossible to regard sympathy as a variation selected by the struggle for existence, can be made clear if we reverse the conditions from which we started to discuss the question. Suppose, for the sake of argument, that a sympathetic community had in some way come into being. Suppose, further, that a non-sympathetic individual appeared in this society as a variation, an assumption sanctioned by the theory of fortuitous variation. His position is diametrically opposed to that of the sympathetic individual among non-sympathetic competitors. He has an advantage, greater if possible, than the disadvantage of his polar opposite. He receives from every side, and gives nothing in return. He will certainly survive, since he adds all the aid afforded by others to the undivided support he renders himself. Suppose, finally, that he is not absolutely alone in his peculiarity, a supposition which the supporters of natural selection cannot consistently exclude. The non-sympathetic few will thrive and multiply ; for they are the 'fittest' and transmit their fitness to their offspring. The process of social disintegration can be stopped only if the sympathetic individuals are able to repress their sympathetic impulses and ruthlessly combine against their selfish competitors.

That the social organism never tends to dissolve in this or any other way, points to the fact that sympathy is not a fortuitous variation which has to contend against other variations, but something which cannot be lost or acquired, something inherent in man's nature as such, and therefore a factor that is present in all human struggles. Clifford's instinct was sound when he incidentally remarked that "we may fairly doubt whether the selfhood of the tribe is not earlier in point of development than that of the individual."[1] Stripped of its paradoxical form, this statement gives the core of the matter. The tribe would not be a tribe unless the individuals composing it were originally, essentially, and by their very nature, social individuals sympathetically interested in their fellows as such, and

[1] *Lectures and Essays*, p. 291.

thus capable of rising above the tribal limits. In other words, if mental beings were originally mutually repellent atoms, devoid of all inner connection with one another, they would remain separate to the end. Natural selection can perhaps do much, but it cannot change the ultimate metaphysical constitution of a section of the universe.

Sympathy, then, is not a fortuitous variation which happens to survive because it is useful; it is an integral and essential part of the nature of man as a psychical being. Moreover, though it had been selected in the manner alleged, it could not have given rise to the sense of right and wrong, even with the aid of intellect. Conscience is not simply the reflective recognition of the fact that it is best to follow the most persistent impulse, for morality is not identical with the sympathetic inclination, and the latter may on occasion be conscientiously condemned. We regard as morally wrong, for instance, the indulgence which springs from the unregulated affection of parent for progeny. Since it is sometimes ethically wrong to follow the dictates of sympathy, it is evident that conscience is not merely the authoritative voice of this element of our nature. Even when the sympathetic impulse coincides with the moral, there is an essential difference between the mere fact that I am impelled to act in one way, and the fact that I feel I ought to act in this manner. It is one thing to have an impulse; it is quite a different thing to judge that this impulse is 'right.' Only when the notions 'right' and 'ought' appear, do we have morality in the true sense; and it is here that the evolutionary accounts of morality are weakest. It is not too much to say that they make no real attempt to show how the consciousness of actual impulses gives rise of itself to something distinct from the bare consciousness of actual fact, of itself gives rise to the feeling that one is right and another wrong.

Hitherto we have been dealing with the possibility of the origin of morality from the struggle for existence. If we turn now to the nature of the fact in question, a more vital objection presents itself. A morality evolved by natural selection could not be morality as it exists. From the point of view of natural selection, right actions are actions which conduce to survival. The up-

holders of the doctrine under discussion do not usually emphasize this aspect of the matter, and are inclined to offer more specious and plausible statements of the case. But it seems undeniable that if morality is selected on account of its survival value, right conduct is conduct that leads to survival. Natural selection necessarily tests moral codes, not by their intrinsic worth, but solely by their survival efficiency. The whole duty of man, therefore, is to exist and promote existence. Surely a most inadequate solution of the riddle of existence! Every one makes a distinction between mere life and life that is worth living, a distinction which finds practical expression in action. And, whatever our practice may be, our moral judgments are conclusive on this point, that morality does not exist for life, but life for morality.

To establish this clearly we must investigate morality itself, and attempt to ascertain the essential nature of moral obligation. In doing this, we shall at the same time take the best method of penetrating to the root of the whole question regarding the relation between morality and natural selection.

As many evolutionists would admit, the essential feature of moral obligation is its internal character. That we are morally obliged to act in a certain way does not mean that God, or the powers that be, will punish us if we do not, or that God has implanted in us a sense of duty as an external restraint on our nature, a foreign tyrant that is within us but not of us. Morality is the expression of our nature; moral obligation is internal obligation, not external compulsion however disguised. Now the statement that obligation is internal can only mean that something appeals to the individual as a thing of value or worth, and therefore a thing that attracts him. It is *his* ideal, it appeals to him because he is what he is; hence the force it exercises is internal, drawn from his own nature. That the agent feels obliged to choose one course of action to the exclusion of all others, implies that one line of conduct has in the circumstances supreme worth as compared with all others. Moral obligation therefore implies an ideal of supreme worth with which a particular mode of behavior is in harmony. Why, then, it will be asked, does morality involve a struggle? Why does the individual feel obliged to

realize his ideal of worth, seeing that obligation implies authority and this in turn presupposes recalcitrant elements. The answer is simple. Self-consciousness is one condition without which the sense of worth could not exist. If the agent is not capable of distinguishing himself from other things, he cannot have the notion of something that appeals to *him*. But the individual and the race alike gradually become self-conscious, and when they come into conscious possession of themselves they find an actually existent nature already developed. A conflict therefore arises between the self as it exists, and the ideal which appeals to the individual when he becomes self-conscious. It is in virtue of this conflict that the ideal of worth appears, not merely as attractive, but also as authoritative, as something the agent is obliged to realize. It is in virtue of all this, that the word 'ought' is so difficult to define. 'I ought' does not signify 'I must,' nor, on the other hand, does it mean merely 'I wish' or 'I am inclined.' It means that the ideal of worth rendered possible by self-consciousness attracts in one direction, while the actual nature for the moment impels in another. It also implies the superiority of the one over the other, a superiority which gives morality its absolute authority and prevents the moral impulse from being simply one factor among others. In short, 'I ought' means 'I owe it to myself to realize my ideal of worth.' "Moral obligation thus represents the conflict between the ideal that the individual wishes to realize, and the actual self which was developed before self-consciousness and ideals of worth appeared." It represents also the fact that the conflict is not between forces which stand on the same level; for what appeals to the agent as a thing of worth has a natural superiority to the impulses which act *a tergo* and derive all their force from that which simply happens to exist.

From the internal character of moral obligation can be deduced the second characteristic of morality, namely, that moral action involves doing the right for the right's sake, and for no other reason. What we feel internally obliged to do, is that which in its own nature appeals to our nature, apart from everything else. Being what it is, it appeals to us as we are, and we may express this by saying that the morally right is chosen for its own sake.

The result of this analysis of moral obligation is that ethical conduct presupposes an ideal of worth which in itself appeals to us because we are what we are. We must now proceed to show that as a matter of fact we do possess such an ideal. Two related facts throw light upon this question. The first is the existence of the feelings of admiration and scorn. We admire or scorn an individual because he is what he is, irrespective of what he may do or has done to ourselves or those in whom we are interested. The other fact is indicated by Mill in that striking passage where he emphasizes the sense of personal dignity which makes us feel that it is better to be a human being dissatisfied than an animal satisfied. This implies that the individual feels that there is a mode of behavior which alone is becoming to him, an ideal which in itself appeals to him, something he owes to himself irrespective of everything. The becoming mode of behavior is alone worthy of him; he is worthy so far as he realizes this ideal; his fellows have worth and are admired so far as they realize it. The sense of personal dignity, therefore, is the basal fact on which the other depends. It is expressed in the feeling that there is something owing to ourselves just because we are what we are. It thus bears within itself the inseparable notions of internal obligation and intrinsic worth.

No elaborate proof of the existence of this basal fact is necessary, for without it the facts of life would be inexplicable. The agent who feels that there is a mode of behavior which he owes to himself, necessarily recognizes that he has a definite part to play in the drama of the universe; hence the Nemesis which pursues the aimless life, the force which impels a man to make the most of his gifts, despite the loss of pleasure and comfort thus involved. Hence, too, the shame which overwhelms the undetected transgressor, and the self-deception by which we seek to escape that sense of degradation in our own eyes which is the essence of shame. This basal fact is the source of conscience; where conscience is derided it appears as honor; where honor seems unknown it manifests itself as a lingering remnant of self-respect. There are certain things the most depraved will not do, come what may, and even the most abandoned can be insulted

by the assumption that they are capable of certain actions. The scope of the principle is not to be judged merely by its manifestations in conduct. Where it is ineffective in action, it makes itself felt in the feelings of shame and self-condemnation.

Assuming, therefore, the existence of an ideal of worth which necessarily appears as something we ought to realize, we may now attempt to ascertain what this implies. As we have seen, worth and internal obligation could not exist without self-consciousness. It does not follow from this, however, that they are direct and necessary implications of the cognitive awareness of self as distinguished from everything else. Air is essential to life, but this does not prove that life is air, or is necessarily involved in air. Moreover, cognition deals with matters of fact, and has nothing to do with evaluation in terms of worth. Worth, therefore, cannot be derived from mere cognition in any form, and a purely cognitive being, though aware of itself as opposed to other things, would have no notion of worth or value. Accordingly, though an ideal of worth is impossible without self-consciousness, the complete fact has other implications which remain to be determined. In this further inquiry, a clue is furnished by the reflection that, while an individual's ideal of worth is *his* ideal, it is not arbitrarily adopted by him. It is his ideal because he is what he is ; consequently, its character is necessarily determined by his nature. The judgment of worth and the feeling of obligation implied therein, point, therefore, to the conclusion that the self-conscious being is not at the mercy of a variety of particular impulses which merely happen to exist, and, on the other hand, is not permitted to excogitate an arbitrary end or capriciously choose a rule of conduct. In other words, the notion of worth implies that there is a definite law and order in the spiritual world. This regulative principle is different from a merely physical law, for self-conscious beings are different from mere things. The form which the law assumes is modified by the medium in which it appears. What is binding on us is that which has worth for us, and the form of the law is : 'Do this, or be unworthy in your own eyes.' From this alternative there is no escape, and this internal principle has thus an inflexibility

of its own, though not the same kind of inflexibility as that which characterizes a 'natural' law.

Since worth implies an inner regulative principle, and this in turn is synonymous with moral obligation, we can therefore assert that moral obligation is simply the form which law assumes in the world of persons as opposed to mere things. To elucidate and develop this point of view, it will be necessary to ascertain what the moral law commands. The definite mode of behavior which an individual feels he owes to himself cannot be at variance with his nature. This does not mean that it must be consistent with his nature in the sense that it allows every impulse full play, or as much indulgence as is consistent with the indulgence of other impulses. The different impulses must be arranged in a scale of worth; otherwise the agent would be a thing and not a person, a natural and not a moral being. Now that which is distinctively the endowment of an individual, that which he alone possesses, or possesses in a special degree, must evidently be that which he feels most called upon to develop; for what he owes to himself above everything is dependent on what he distinctively is. Generally speaking, therefore, we may say that man as man ought to realize his human capacities in the degree and manner determined by his distinctive nature. But each human being, as we have seen, is not an isolated particular. The individual's sympathetic relations with others are elements of his own nature. In virtue of this, he has not duties to himself, and, in addition, duties to others. His duties to his fellows constitute a part of his duty to himself, and since what is of supreme worth for him must be essentially the same for his fellows, the supreme end for each individual is the realization of human capacities in general. To this end all tendencies of his nature must be subordinated; by this must all impulses be judged.

Further, as man cannot be isolated from his fellows, he cannot be separated from his environment as a whole. What in particular he has to do to attain his end, depends upon circumstances. Though moral rules may be generally valid as a matter of fact, there are no moral rules intrinsically absolute. There is, and can be, but one absolute in morality, namely, the obligation to realize the distinctive human capacities as can best

be done in the circumstances. What the moral law enjoins is determined by the nature of the individual and of his environment, that is, by the place which the individual occupies in the system of things. What the moral law commands, therefore, is that each play his part as defined by his place in the universe, that each perform his proper function in the whole.

The full significance of moral obligation now becomes apparent. That the universe is in some sense an organic whole or system is a necessary presupposition of science and philosophy alike. Its supreme principle must be that each member of the system is impelled to perform its functions, and cannot with impunity fail in this respect. Otherwise the universe would be a mere aggregate and not a whole; for the very conception of an organic whole is that the members do not act for themselves in isolation but play their part in the system. The moral law is thus an expression of the supreme principle on which the universe depends. The form which the supreme law here assumes is appropriate to, and determined by, the nature of the medium in which it appears. Conscience, then, is not a direct product of reason; it is not the voice of the tribal self, or even of humanity. It points to a whole in which the social organism is included. It is the manifestation of the whole in the part.

The application of this to the natural selection theory of ethics is obvious. The moral law does not enjoin survival, but performance of function regardless of all else. It is not evolved in the struggle for existence, for it is the supreme principle of the universe as manifested in the world of persons. It is an expression of the supreme principle which makes the universe a universe, and cannot be evolved by any process which goes on within the universe.

That this is a more tenable view of morality than the one proposed by Darwin and his followers, can be further supported by a direct appeal to the facts of moral evolution. For there is ethical as well as organic evolution. The moral law does not change its essential character, but individuals become more moral, progress toward a more perfect realization of the moral law. On what principles, then, does this evolution depend? In the moral realm we find something similar to the fact of variation

in the region of life. Great ethical examples and teachers may be regarded as striking examples of moral variation. They introduce something new into the moral world, and when we attempt to explain this we are forced, directly or through the intervening conditions, back to the fact of variation, which simply means that the universe is not dead or static, but is the manifestation of an essentially active and productive principle. If variations did not appear here, as in life, ethical customs and institutions would petrify, habit would rule the world, and the race would cease to progress. Along with variation, we find selection also. The form of selection which here prevails has nothing to do with biological survival. When a moral variation appears which throws new light upon the range and content of the moral law, the more adequate ideal of worth necessarily appeals to moral individuals. It is selected and survives in the sense that it passes into the lives of individuals. It is selected, not because it is an aid in the struggle for biological existence, but simply because it is a better ideal. This adoption of the more adequate expression of the moral ideal necessarily leads to a struggle. The new cannot be adopted without effort by a being whose actual nature has grown up under the influence of old ideals and of forces which are absolutely non-ideal. The struggle, however, is a struggle within the individual for his ideal. All this is expressed, by those who will be biological at all hazards, in the statement that the struggle for survival is no longer a struggle between individuals but between ideals. This tends to obscure the essential nature of the whole process. Ideals apart from individuals are mere abstractions. In themselves they do not struggle, in themselves they do not survive. The struggle is a struggle within the individual, by the individual; its sole object is the individual realization of the more adequate ideal.

The whole history of civilization shows, on the plane of objective fact, the working of this principle of moral selection. Amid all the struggle and conflict of nations and the rise and fall of empires, we find that the higher ethical ideals tend to maintain themselves against the lower just because they harmonize better with human conceptions of worth. A vanquished nation may

conquer its conquerors if its civilization is higher. In this way the ethically higher constantly tends to be preserved. Here the principle of natural selection is reversed. Might is not right, but right is might. In a real and literal sense, that which has the right to survive possesses *de facto* the might.

This general conclusion can be further substantiated by an argument drawn from the very nature of evolution itself. Evolution is not a law in the strict sense of the word; it is a result of laws and presupposes laws. The form it assumes in the case of any particular class of phenomena must be determined, therefore, by the special laws which there prevail. Where the laws differ the form of evolution must differ also. Natural selection, for instance, presupposes life and the laws of life. It is incapable of acting where life does not exist; it ceases to apply when we pass from life and the struggle for life to personality and the struggle for ideals of worth. From the essential nature of evolution, therefore, moral evolution must be different from any form of organic evolution, since it holds, not in the region of mere life, but in the world of personality.

A final problem arises from this statement of the case. Moral beings are also living beings, and it seems generally admitted that natural selection is 'in some sense and to some extent' a principle which operates in the organic world. Accordingly, we are confronted with the question of the relation between natural selection and the moral order. At this point we can only indicate the general solution. Stripped of its mythological wrappings, the essence of the natural selection doctrine is seen to be the bare statement of the fact that if an individual is out of all harmony with his biological environment he will biologically perish. Natural selection therefore is simply an expression, in the region of life, of the fact that the universe is a system. As organic it is elastic, and can survive under a certain amount of discoördination and mal-adjustment. But, if a thing comes to be wholly at variance with the system, it must disappear from it. Natural selection and the moral law are therefore different expressions of the one fundamental principle: that the universe is not an aggregate of parts, but in some sense a unity.

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~~Optimist~~

That the Universe is a Divine & moral unity, with which each person is the moral agent ought to live ~~increasingly~~ in harmony, — on pain of eternal extinction, in the universal System; — and that it is, accordingly, no ~~mere~~ chaotic aggregate of ~~meaningless~~ appearances, — is the final Venture, ~~of~~ ing Optimistic moral Faith, on which all personal life and agency ~~as well as~~ ~~social & philosophy~~ ~~turns~~, & verified ~~& vindicated~~ by the reductio ad absurdum of absolutely paralytic nescience latent involved in the latter alternative.